

IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE CAPITOL

JUNE 2-8, 2009

June 2, 2009

NOTE: Information copied directly from media source

St. Louis politicians call on Governor, Attorney General, to stop Clemons execution

KWMU, Adam Allington

Several St. Louis politicians are asking Governor Nixon to stay the execution of Reggie Clemons. Clemons was sentenced to death as an accomplice to the 1991 rape and murder of Robin and Julie Kerry and is scheduled to be put to death on June 17th. Clemons death would be the second execution in Missouri in less than one month. **State Representative Jamilah Nasheed** asserts that Clemons' confession came only after he was beaten by police officers. "The evidence is not valid and we truly believe that the evidence has been tainted and there needs to be either a retrial or a life sentence," says Nasheed.

Bills Pile Up For Governor

KOMU, Brian Lewis

The legislature delivered 163 bills to the governor last month, and now the executive branch begins to sift through them deciding which to pass and which to veto. One bill that's awaiting review is HB 361, or 'The Missouri Anti-Real-ID Bill'. HB 361 prohibits Missouri's Department of Revenue from enforcing the identification enhancement provisions of the 2005 federal Real ID Law. **Jim Guest** (R-King City) sponsored HB 361 because, he says, "it's the only way to counter the Real ID requirements." "Real ID is one step towards Big Brother tracking you," Guest said.

Governor hopes loans will lift small business : \$2M in funds to boost state's economy

St. Joseph News-Press, Alyson E. Raletz

Gov. Jay Nixon is banking on a batch of \$2 million in small business loans to kick start the state's economy. The Democrat on Monday announced the state would begin taking applications for his micro-loan program, which is aimed at increasing small business owners' access to capital during the recession. Businesses with up to five employees will be able to apply for loans between \$2,500 and \$25,000 at an interest rate of 3 percent to be paid back within 10 years.

Mo. panel to study fusion center's militia report

KMOX, Associated Press

The Missouri House has created a committee to study the release of a controversial report suggesting militia members tend to favor certain candidates. The interim House committee is to hold hearings across the state.

MIAC report under review: Lawmakers examining document that linked some views to militias.

Springfield News-Leader, Chad Livengood

A special House committee has been formed to investigate the inner workings of a state agency that produced a controversial report linking some social conservative views to militia membership. **State Rep. Bob Dixon**, R-Springfield, will chair the committee during the interim between legislative sessions.

The real emphasis is going to be on what oversight is currently in place, rather than going back and rehashing the report and the details of the report," Dixon said. "What I don't want it to become is a witch hunt on law enforcement who are doing their due diligence to keep citizens safe."

Richard, R-Joplin, appointed 16 House members to the interim panel, including Dixon and fellow Greene County **Reps. Shane Schoeller** and **Jim Viebrock**. Schoeller, R-Willard, said MIAC and Highway Patrol employees should not view the committee's scrutiny of their intelligence gathering as a witch hunt. "If you've done what you think is the right thing to do, there should be nothing to be afraid of," he said.

Viebrock, R-Republic, said he intends to grill state bureaucrats about the content of the report, which the patrol officially retracted on March 25. "I'm personally going to demand some of the intelligence they're looking at," Viebrock said. Viebrock said he got many complaints from constituents about the report's contents and generalizations of conservative thought. He wants to know whether the MIAC report was based on actual intelligence, not information swiped off the Internet. "If that is the entirely basis of their existence, then as a legislator I will join my fellow legislators and we will put an end to it," Viebrock said. "To accuse God-fearing, anti-abortion, gun-toting Americans as terrorists is unacceptable."

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Nixon spreads flight expenses: Travel costs charged to various agencies.

Springfield News-Leader, David A. Lieb

Missouri's governor has been charging the cost of his airplane travel to other government agencies, taking a small bite out of their budgets at the very time his administration has been urging departments to hold down their own expenses. Nixon says it's proper to ascribe his travel costs to other offices, because he typically is highlighting issues handled by those departments. Often, officials from those agencies fly along. But it isn't the typical way for Missouri governors to pay for their travel. Gubernatorial flights traditionally have been charged to the governor's office budget, with the notable exception of Nixon's predecessor, Matt Blunt, who used campaign funds to pay for his first three years of official flights. **House Budget Committee Chairman Allen Ictet**, R-Wildwood, was surprised to learn Nixon was billing others for his travel. The state budget assumes those costs will be paid by the governor's office, Ictet said.

"I think it's more than appropriate for the governor to travel by plane, but for transparency's sake, any trips he takes certainly ought to be charged to the appropriate accounting code within his own office," Ictet said.

Growing list of politicians find fault with term limits

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Tony Messenger

Imagine Missouri's stately Capitol with a vacuum hose attached like a glove around its rounded dome. That's how **House Speaker Ron Richard** describes the effect of term limits on the General Assembly. "There's always a vacuum up here. There's always someone seeking power," Richard said. "If the legislative branch doesn't get it, forces outside the building might set policy." The speaker's comments land him firmly on a growing bandwagon of Republicans and Democrats in the Show-Me State who have become disillusioned with Missouri's constitutionally mandated limits on the amount of time elected officials can serve in the House and the Senate.

For the past two years, **Rep. Gayle Kingery**, R-Poplar Bluff, has proposed a bill that would expand the term limits from eight years to 16 years in each chamber. Like Richard, Kingery believes the current term limits are too short, not giving lawmakers enough time to learn the ropes and be effective.

To **Sara Lampe**, a Democratic House member from Springfield, the problem with term limits is that everything goes too fast. Lawmakers rush and make mistakes.

Meanwhile, those positioning themselves for a quick stint as speaker — such as **Rep. Steve Tilley**, R-Perryville — are raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in no time at all.

Eight years is simply "not long enough," said state **Rep. Steve Hobbs**, R-Mexico. "But I'm still in favor of term limits, because power does corrupt." Hobbs said that the longer you're here, "you become comfortable, and that's not necessarily a good thing."

St. Charles Rep to Seek Leadership

Arch City Chronicle

Rep. Doug Funderburk of St. Charles has told his colleagues that he will be running for Speaker Pro Tem, a caucus leadership position, in 2010.

June 4, 2009

Sharp declines in state revenue mean budget cuts are on horizon

St. Louis Beacon, Jo Mannies

Gov. Jay Nixon confirmed this afternoon that he will need to make some last-minute trims to the current state budget within the next few weeks, to account for declining state revenue that otherwise could knock the 2009 budget year out of balance when it ends June 30. Since the state constitution requires a balanced budget, Nixon has no other choice, said state budget director Linda Luebbering in a telephone interview today.

"The budget will be balanced," Luebbering said. The latest state figures signal that it won't be an easy task. State income numbers released today show that, as of May 31, revenue is down about 5 percent (\$362 million) compared to a year ago. (The total state general-revenue budget is slightly less than \$9 billion.)

Although calling it "a very challenging budget," Nixon downplayed how severe this month's cuts would be.

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Missouri, Illinois governors appeal to Biden for light-rail money

St. Louis Beacon, Jo Mannies

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon and his eastern colleague, Illinois Gov. Patrick Quinn, got to make a pitch today for federal light-rail money during a roundtable discussion in Washington with Vice President Joe Biden and administration transportation officials.

According to Nixon's staff, "The governor said he wants Missouri to be at the forefront of high speed rail projects" that could be financed with federal stimulus money.

GOP to Nixon: You broke promise on fee offices. Nixon to GOP: Who would you pick?

Kansas City Star, Steve Kraske

The Missouri GOP today said Gov. values money over merit in selecting driver's license fee offices. That breaks a promise Nixon made to clean up the system and end patronage, the GOP said. "Montee is the latest in a line of loyal Democrats who have been awarded license offices," said Smith. "Nixon has sent a clear message: money is more important than merit when doling out fee offices to his supporters—his actions speak louder than words." Montee promised to return 8 percent of revenues back to the state, an amount that topped two bidders and was nearly identical to the fourth.

"This is a completely open process," Cardetti said. "If they don't like who got it, who should have gotten it?" Missouri GOP spokesman had an answer to that --, the current operator who was one of the four bidders. Smith, however, did not promise to return any money to the state. In fact, Smith told Prime Buzz on Tuesday that he didn't see how Montee could return the 8 percent he's pledging and still provide top service.

June 5, 2009

Will jobless bill pass muster with feds? Nixon puts odds at 50-50

Kansas City Star, Steve Kraske

State and federal officials are still discussing a controversy over expanding unemployment benefits in Missouri, Gov. Jay Nixon said today in Kansas City. Lawmakers believed that a new law they passed this year would make the state eligible for \$133 million in federal stimulus money. But shortly after the session ended last month, federal officials started questioning that. They said the wording of the Missouri law puts the state's eligibility into doubt because legislators made the expansion temporary -- not permanent as federal officials require. Nixon met with key officials Wednesday during a trip to D.C. The prognosis? "We're right at 50-50," he said. "The issue comes down to whether or not we can thread that needle to say we will get these benefits, but have that ability to remove these potential costs to Missouri businesses in the years to come."

Expansion of tax-credit programs to create jobs in Missouri goes into effect

Kansas City Star, Jason Noble

Expansions of tax-credit programs that Missouri leaders say are critical to creating jobs went into effect Thursday following approval by Gov. Jay Nixon. Nixon, a Democrat, celebrated the bill-signing with stops in Kansas City, St. Louis and Columbia. The bill was his top priority for the recently adjourned legislative session and ultimately passed with broad support from Republicans and Democrats. "This legislation is a clear example of the cooperation, compromise and progress that is possible when we come together across party lines to put Missouri workers and Missouri families first," Nixon said while visiting a state assistance office for job seekers.

Local reps still weighing races

St. Joseph News-Press, Alyson Raletz

State Reps. Ed Wildberger and **Martin Rucker** sometime this summer plan to announce who will attempt to fill the upcoming vacancy of Sen. Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph. They divulged interest in the 34th Senatorial District early this winter, but the pair agreed that they wanted to avoid a bloody primary and would decide among themselves who'd file for the position. The Democratic primary could be bloody enough, as **Rep. Jason Grill**, D-Kansas City, also could put his hat in the ring. On the GOP side, **Reps. Dr. Rob Schaaf**, R-St. Joseph, and **Jason Brown**, R-Platte City, are interested in running, too.

Business Journal names 30 under 30 winners

St. Louis Business Journal

The Business Journal has selected its 2009 class of 30 under 30. The awards honor 30 outstanding St. Louis-area business leaders under the age of 30. ... **Rep. Don Calloway**, Missouri House of Representatives

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Spreng to Run for Spreng's Seat

Arch City Chronicle

St. Louis County state representative **Michael Spreng** is termed in 2010. His wife, Churie Spreng, has filed a campaign committee to run for his seat (District 76).

June 7, 2009

Nixon misusing stimulus funds, some say: Governor plans to use money to pay state tax refunds.

Springfield News-Leader, Chad Livengood

Several members of Missouri's congressional delegation disapprove of Gov. Jay Nixon using \$250 million in federal stimulus money to pay off overdue state income tax refunds. On Friday, Missourians who filed for a state income tax refund before April 16 should have received their refund postmarked or sent via electronic deposit, according to the Department of Revenue. Late last month, the Nixon administration decided to use \$250 million of federal stimulus money to catch up on a backlog of money the government owes thousands of Missourians. But when Congress sent the stimulus legislation to President Obama in February, direct aid for the state was supposed to be used for creating jobs through one-time infrastructure projects and preserving public sector jobs and state programs, said U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Lexington.

"That was clearly not what the money was intended to do," House Budget Committee Chairman **Allen Ictet**, R-Wildwood, said of using the money for tax refunds. "It was not intended to be used just to pay tax refunds just because the state doesn't have the money on hand to do that."

State representative Terry Swinger (D-- Caruthersville) and Governor Jay Nixon encourages schools to use funding toward Caring for Missourians initiative

Daily Dunklin Democrat, Deanna Coronado

Recent estimates suggests that over 800,000 individuals in Missouri are presently uninsured and that 95 percent of Missouri counties are designated as underserved in terms of healthcare which concerns area legislators including State Representative **Terry Swinger** (D-- Caruthersville). The numbers don't sit well with Swinger and other politicians who have openly supported plans to address these issues, including one by Governor Jay Nixon and the Hospital Association who proposed in recent months a measure supporters claimed would put 35,000 Missourians on healthcare.

"As previously discussed, I am so disappointed Governor Jay Nixon's and the Hospital Association's plan to put 35,000 Missourians on healthcare didn't pass," Swinger said.

"However, a positive outcome in healthcare came in the form of funding higher education institutions that they can use towards Governor Nixon's proposed Caring for Missourians initiative."

Lawmakers no help on bargaining: Legislature's lack of action leaves schools adrift about teacher representation.

Springfield News-Leader, Chad Livengood & Gregory Trotter

The Missouri legislature's failure to address public school teacher collective bargaining issues raised in a 2007 state Supreme Court ruling has left districts vulnerable to lawsuits, critics say. Springfield Public Schools found out firsthand on Tuesday when its largest teacher representation group, the Springfield National Education Association, filed suit in a long-standing disagreement over exclusive representation.

Rep. Kevin Wilson, R-Neosho, sponsored MSTTA-backed legislation this year that would allow teachers in a district dominated by one employee organization to join another one or the right to refrain from joining any dues-collecting group at all. "They want a winner-take-all election," Wilson said. "If there are not exclusive representation votes, they're not interested in discussing it much further."

"The constitution is on the side of the NEA," said state **Rep. Sara Lampe**, D-Springfield.

Lampe has been on the NEA's side, arguing that allowing teachers to vote on exclusive representation is democratic in nature. "An election is majority rule," Lampe said. "That is a democratic principle."

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Tourism still a priority for Wood

Branson Daily News, Phil Surratt

State Rep. and tourism committee chairman **Dennis Wood** said he is glad to know the \$24 million tourism budget for the state is in place and his committee and other tourism interests can get down to the business of attracting more people to the state. "We were afraid our budget was going to be trimmed back for 2010 but it equals what we had in 2009," Wood said. "In economic times you have to understand you don't cut tourism when you are low on funds. It's the only investment that the state of Missouri makes that it gets almost three times in tax dollars back for every dollar we spend."

June 8, 2009

Wish lists may bring billions here

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Bill Lambrecht & Sean Rose

If the Missouri and Illinois delegations in Congress get their way, the St. Louis region will get a bounty of federal money next year, including billions to keep alive Boeing's line of C-17 cargo planes and \$650 million for an extension of MetroLink in St. Louis. Congressional spending requests for 2009 — also known as earmarks — would deliver a trove of projects to eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois. They would range from a \$45 million Delmar Loop trolley, to multimillion-dollar contracts for local producers of body armor and laser weapons, to \$528 for gun accessories for police in Chester, Ill. The wish lists could bring millions more to fight meth production in a region plagued by backwoods drugs — \$2 million to root out labs in the Mark Twain National Forest alone. Other proposals: \$2 million for environmentally friendly Great Rivers Greenway trails and \$200,000 to bring kids from around the region to the St. Louis Zoo. The requests are part of the annual budget process in Washington and are separate from economic stimulus funding.

NIXON'S WEEK 21 GRADE: B –

KY3, David Catanese

Anytime a Governor gets to sign his chief legislative initiative into law, he's probably had a pretty good week. Gov. Nixon got to dot the i's on an economic development bill that expands the pool of tax credits the state can give to businesses to help lure them here. He also acknowledged that "I don't think we're done," when it comes to tax credit reform, clearly signaling that the debate over how this money should be used is far from settled.

But if the Republicans had to run against Nixon later this year, you'd likely soon see a television ad lambasting the Governor for "promising reform," but instead is rewarding "political contributors." (We're talking about those fee offices.)

Law falls short on health coverage

Southeast Missourian, David A. Lieb (AP)

Missouri's attempt to expand coverage to thousands of people unable to get affordable health insurance has failed. Some supporters of a 2007 Missouri law projected it would extend health coverage to as many as 20,000 hard-to-insure residents through a mixture insurance reforms aimed at lowering costs. Two years later, only about 400 additional people are insured through the plan. And the executive director of the Missouri Health Insurance Pool estimates only half of those are attributable to the 2007 law. Missouri officials are still arguing over the best way expand health insurance to at least a portion of the more than 700,000 now lacking it.

That leaves the 2007 measure as Missouri's last health-care expansion law. It was sponsored by **Rep. Doug Ervin**, R-Kearney, and Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, whose term expired in January. Ervin says he envisioned the two sections as linked, with small employers essentially subsidizing their employees' purchase of individual health plans through the state pool.